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12/12/79
UNCLASSIFIED

SN 10203

705
File *Cox*

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INDICATE
☐ COLLECT
☐ CHARGE TO

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TELEGRAM

12065:
E.O. 12958X
TAGS:
SUBJECT:

ACTION:
INFO :

AMB
CHARGE
POL
CHRON

FROM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES CLASSIFICATION [REDACTED]

XDS-4 12/13/99 (CHAPLIN, MAXWELL) OR-M
AR, SHUM, PINT
(U) THE COX CASE: SOME CONCLUSIONS

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
(X) Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s):
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date Declassify on Reason

SECSTATE WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 10203

DECAPTIONED

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES 9865; B) BUENOS AIRES 10012

1. [REDACTED] ENTIRE TEXT.)
2. THE FORCED DEPARTURE FROM ARGENTINA OF BUENOS AIRES
HERALD EDITOR ROBERT COX, UNDER THE THREAT OF DEATH,
DRAMATICALLY ILLUSTRATES THE OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD
THAT COULD TAKE THIS COUNTRY TO A STABLE, HUMANE
POLITICAL ORDER.
3. WHO DID IT?: THE THREAT TO COX WAS THE WORK OF
ELEMENTS OF ONE OF THE SECURITY FORCES. THIS IS AN
AND
OPINION SHARED BY COX, THIS EMBASSY, MEMBERS OF THE
SECURITY FORCES WE HAVE SPOKEN TO. COX REPORTS THAT

DRAFTED BY: POL:TBFRIEDMAN:JK *TBF* DRAFTING DATE: 12/13/79 TEL. EXT. 276 CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: POLCOUNS:WHHALLMAN *WHH*

CLEARANCES:
DAO:COL. ARMACDONALD *P* *m*
POL/R:JDISTEEAN *JD*

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PRESIDENT VIDELA, INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY,
AND HIS INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GENERAL MARTINEZ ALL
ADMITTED TO HIM THAT SECURITY ELEMENTS WERE
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE THREATS. THERE IS NO DOUBT
THAT THE PERPETRATORS WERE ACTING WITHOUT THE
APPROVAL OR KNOWLEDGE OF VIDELA AND OTHER RESPONSIBLE
MEMBERS OF THE GOA. IN FACT, VIDELA SOUGHT TO PER-
SUADE COX TO STAY. *****

4. WHY DID THEY DO IT?: THE SAME ATTITUDES AND
ACTIONS THAT EARNED COX THE ADMIRATION OF ARGENTINES
AND OTHERS WHO BELIEVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM
EARNED HIM THE ENMITY OF THOSE WHO GAVE COX THE CHOICE
OF EMIGRATING OR BEING KILLED -- A THREAT THEY ARE
CAPABLE OF HAVING CARRIED OUT. FOR THESE MEN COX
BECAME A SYMBOL OF WHAT THEY HATE:

--- FOR THEM COX IS A SYMBOL OF ZIONISM AND JEWISH
CONSPIRACY: VICIOUS ANTI-SEMITES, THESE MEN
ARE CONVINCED THAT COX IS IN SPIRIT, AND
PERHAPS IN FACT, JEWISH, (HE IS NOT). MANY
OF THE RECENT THREATS TO COX HAD OVERT OR
IMPLIED ELEMENTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM;

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--- FOR THEM COX IS A SYMBOL OF LIBERALISM: TO THESE MEN LIBERALISM IS THE HANDMAIDEN OF COMMUNISM AND THE PROTECTOR OF TERRORISM. COX'S SPIRITED DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONVICTED HIM IN THEIR EYES OF BEING A LIBERAL.

--- FOR THEM COX IS AN ALLY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC TEAM, WHICH THEY DETEST. XENOPHOBIC NATIONALISTS AND STATIST, THEY BELIEVE THAT THE CURRENT ECONOMIC PROGRAM WILL DESTROY THE COUNTRY'S INDUSTRY AND TURN IT OVER TO FOREIGNERS. COX DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM IN THE HERALD AND IS A CLOSE FRIEND OF ONE OF THE PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE ECONOMIC TEAM, WALTER KLEIN.

5. WHY NOW?: COX HAD LONG AGO EARNED THE HOSTILITY OF THE MEN WHO HAVE NOW SILENCED HIM IN ARGENTINA. WHAT CAUSED THEM TO PICK THE PRESENT MOMENT TO LET THEIR CUP OF VENOM RUN OVER INTO OVERT THREATS? PERHAPS THEIR PATIENCE WITH COX WAS FINALLY EXHAUSTED. BUT PERHAPS COX'S ENEMIES WERE SPURRED TO ACTION BY THEIR CONCERN THAT THE COUNTRY SEEMS HEADED TOWARDS CONTINUED POLITICAL EVOLUTION AND A MORE DECENT HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. ~~TO SOME~~ TO SOME /IN THE SECURITY FORCES SUCH A PROSPECT IS DISCOURAGING AND FRIGHTENING.

THAT COX STAY IN THE COUNTRY, BECAUSE HIS DEPARTURE UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES HAS DAMAGED THE GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE ABROAD. MOREOVER, AS HE TOLD COX, HE WANTED HIM TO REMAIN BECAUSE WHEN THE HERALD PRONOUNCED THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IMPROVED THEN FOREIGN OBSERVERS WOULD BE CONVINCED.

9. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO BRING THE SECURITY FORCES UNDER TOTAL CONTROL WOULD INVOLVE A DEGREE OF CONFRONTATION WITH HARDLINERS. ONE SOURCE FAMILIAR WITH THE MEN AND THE INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED TOLD US RECENTLY THAT OUT OF CONTROL OPERATIONS -- LIKE THAT AGAINST COX -- WOULD REMAIN A POSSIBILITY UNTIL THE ARMY, AT LEAST, WAS THOROUGHLY DOMINATED BY A STRONG, FEARED LEADER LIKE GENERAL BUSSI (WHO MIGHT WELL CREATE HIS OWN GENERATION OF ABUSES).

OF INSUFFICIENT POWER

10. BUT VIDELA'S CLAIM/XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX IS A HOLLOW ONE. HE AND GENERAL VIOLA HAVE TRIMMED BACK THE POWER AND THE PREROGATIVES OF THE HARD LINE IN RECENT MONTHS: THEY APPOINTED THEIR CHOSEN SUCCESSOR TO VIOLA AS ARMY COMMANDER; THEY FREED TIMERMAN; THEY HAVE INDEED BROUGHT THE SECURITY FORCES UNDER TIGHTER COMMAND AND CONTROL.

11. THUS, WE BELIEVE IT MORE TRUTHFUL TO SAY THAT VIDELA AND HIS ADVISERS, WHO NEVER LIKED COX'S ROLE AS THEIR CRITIC, HAD INSUFFICIENT INCENTIVES TO

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RISK CONFRONTATION WITH THE HARD LINE OVER COX. IN THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN MILITARY DISSIDENCE AND, PERHAPS, A DROP IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNTER TERRORIST EFFORT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DEPARTURE OF COX FROM ARGENTINA WHILE EMBARRASSING TO THE GOVERNMENT ABROAD DOES NOT, FINALLY, WEIGH VERY HEAVILY ON THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. BUT A MORE PONDERED EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION SUGGESTS TO US THAT UNLESS AND UNTIL THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADVISERS RISK A POLICY OF CONFRONTATION WITH RENEGADE ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES AND THEIR PROTECTORS, PROGRESS TOWARDS THE RULE OF LAW HERE WILL REMAIN FRAGILE.

CHAPLIN *mc*

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